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SEA

SERVICE DATE - FEBRUARY 7, 2003  
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB Docket No. AB-43 (SUB-NO. 173X)

Illinois Central Railroad Company – Abandonment Exemption – in Forrest County, MS

### BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, Illinois Central Railroad Company (IC) has filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment of 2.4 miles of rail line in Hattiesburg, Forrest County, Mississippi. The proposed abandonment extends from milepost MH 0.66 to milepost MH 3.06 and is known as Central District Trackage. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the exemption becomes effective, the railroad will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances, and to dispose of the right-of-way.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

IC states that the line crosses over a relatively flat terrain through residential, industrial and commercial areas as well as parts of the University of Southern Mississippi campus. The width of the right-of-way varies between 25 feet to 240 feet, but most of the trackage has a right-of-way width of 50 feet or less. There are two customers on the line and no overhead traffic on the line.

### ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The railroad has submitted an environmental report that concludes the quality of the human environment will not be affected significantly as a result of the abandonment or any post-abandonment activities, including salvage and disposition of the right-of-way. The railroad has served the environmental and historical reports on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Board's environmental rules at 49 CFR 1105.7(b). We have investigated and reviewed the record in this proceeding.

IC states that no jobs would be lost or affected by the proposed abandonment. IC further states that it plans to salvage rail, ties and track material from the line and remove sixteen highway grade crossings. IC states that the at-grade bridge under which U.S. Highway 49 travels would remain in place at milepost MH 2.90. The locations of the sixteen at-grade crossings that would be removed are as follows: Union Street at milepost MH 0.89; Main Street at milepost MH 0.99; West Street at milepost MH 1.19; North Street at milepost MH 1.52; Rawls Street at milepost MH 1.97; Oliver Street at milepost MH 2.11; Melba Street at milepost MH 2.33; N. 19<sup>th</sup> Street at milepost MH 2.41; 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue at milepost MH 2.80; Northwood Drive at milepost MH

2.91; and six private crossings at milepost MH 2.28, milepost MH 2.50, milepost MH 2.55, milepost MH 2.60, milepost MH 2.73, and milepost MH 2.77.

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History has submitted comments stating that no properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places would be affected by the proposed abandonment.

The Mississippi Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) has submitted comments stating that a plant species of special concern, the Appendaged Lobelia (*Lobelia appendiculata*) is located near the proposed abandonment. MNHP recommends that precautions be taken to prevent salvage activities from disturbing the species and its environment. We will recommend a condition based on MNHP's recommendations.

## **Traffic**

Hercules Corporation and Mississippi Tank are the two customers on the line. According to IC, Hercules Corporation has two rail leads into its plant, only one of which is connected to the proposed abandonment. IC states that the lead off of the proposed abandonment has not carried traffic for many years, and the other lead will remain intact.

Mississippi Tank received 6 inbound and 6 outbound carloads in 2001 and 3 inbound carloads through November of 2002, according to IC data. Using year 2001 data as the base year,<sup>1</sup> 12 rail carloads could possibly be converted to truck traffic. Using a conversion factor of 4 trucks per railcar,<sup>2</sup> SEA calculated that, if all the rail traffic is diverted to truck traffic, 48 loaded and 48 empty trucks (assuming an empty backhaul) could be added to area roadways per year, which would be less than two trucks per week.

## **CONDITIONS**

We recommend that the following environmental condition be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority:

**The Illinois Central Railroad Company shall consult with the Mississippi Natural Heritage Program prior to conducting any salvage activities to determine measures to identify the species of special concern, the Appendaged Lobelia (*Lobelia appendiculata*), and to develop precautions to prevent disturbance to the species and its environment, if encountered during salvage.**

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<sup>1</sup> Because 2001 is the most recent complete year of data, the Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) is using 2001 as the base year.

<sup>2</sup> The conversion factor is an estimate used to calculate the rail to truck conversion of varied commodities.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude that, as currently proposed, and if the recommended condition is imposed, abandonment of the line will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the environmental impact statement process is unnecessary.

Alternatives to the proposed abandonment would include denial (and therefore no change in operations), discontinuance of service without abandonment, and continued operation by another operator. In any of these cases, the existing quality of the human environment and energy consumption should not be affected.

## PUBLIC USE

Following abandonment and salvage of the rail line, the right-of-way may be suitable for other public use. A request containing the requisite four-part showing for imposition of a public use condition (49 CFR 1152.28) must be filed with the Board and served on the railroad within the time specified in the Federal Register notice.

## TRAILS USE

A request for a notice of interim trail use (NITU) is due to the Board, with a copy to the railroad, within 10 days of publication of the notice of the petition for exemption in the Federal Register. Nevertheless, the Board will accept late-filed requests as long as it retains jurisdiction to do so in a particular case. This request must comply with the Board's rules for use of rights-of-way as trails (49 CFR 1152.29).

## PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

The Board's Office of Public Services responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact the Office of Public Services directly at (202) 565-1592, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Washington, DC 20423.

## COMMENTS

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, you should send an **original and two copies** to Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Rini Ghosh, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-43 (Sub-No. 173X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Rini Ghosh, the environmental contact for this case by phone at (202) 565-1539, fax at (202) 565-9000, or e-mail at [ghoshr@stb.dot.gov](mailto:ghoshr@stb.dot.gov).

Date made available to the public: **February 7, 2003**

**Comment due date: March 7, 2003.**

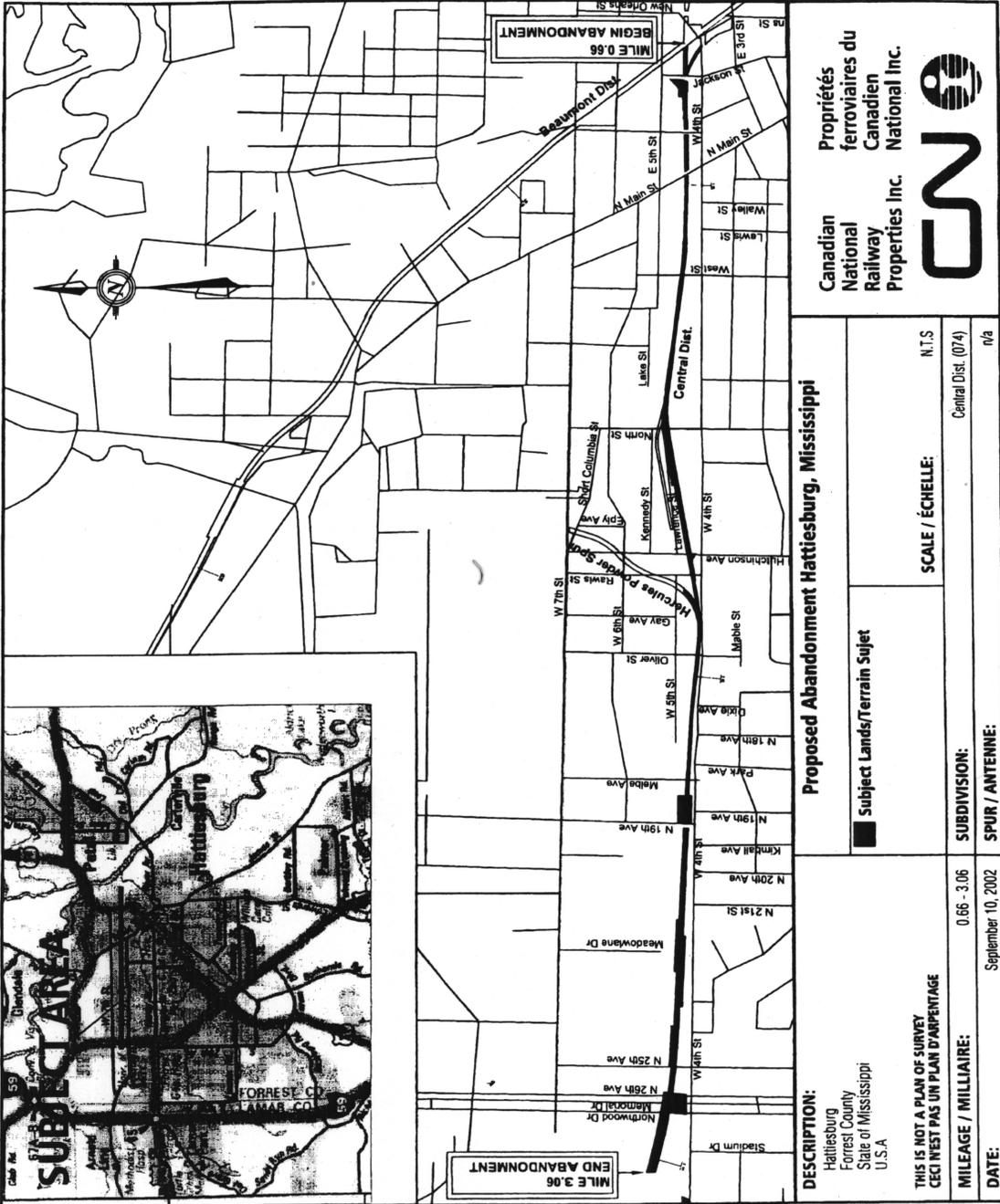
By the Board, Victoria Rutson, Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis.

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary

Attachment

AB-43 (SUB-NO. 173X)

ID 33260



Propriétés  
ferroviaires du  
National  
Canadian  
Railway  
Properties Inc.  
National Inc.



**Proposed Abandonment Hattiesburg, Mississippi**

<p>■ Subject Lands/Terrain Sujet</p>	SCALE / ÉCHELLE:	N.T.S.
	SUBDIVISION:	Central Dist. (074)
MILEAGE / MILLIAIRE:		0.66 - 3.06
DATE:		September 10, 2002
SPUR / ANTENNE:		n/a

**DESCRIPTION:**  
Hattiesburg  
Forrest County  
State of Mississippi  
U.S.A.

**THIS IS NOT A PLAN OF SURVEY  
CECI N'EST PAS UN PLAN D'ABANDONNEMENT**